

Prosecutor still hears from Manson



Vincent Bugliosi has a macabre pen pal — Charles Manson.

“I’ve gotten a couple of letters from him,” said the attorney who successfully prosecuted the mass murderer and his clan in 1969. “He speaks in riddles, and you have to be pretty intelligent to do this. But beneath them are hidden death threats.”

When Bugliosi didn’t respond to the letters, Manson wrote him again.

“He wondered why I didn’t answer him,” says Bugliosi. “I didn’t answer that one either.”

Bugliosi, who is now a defense attorney in Los Angeles, says he is amused that the news media spends so much time reporting on the possibility of Manson’s parole.

“He is never going to be set free,” Bugliosi predicted. “He probably is responsible for the death of 35 people.”

Bugliosi is also amused when reporters conduct interviews with Manson.

“He acts crazier than he is,” Bugliosi said. “He knows what he is doing.”

So does Bugliosi. He co-wrote “Helter Skelter,” the saga of his battle with Manson and his followers, and it became both a best seller and a successful TV miniseries. His next book, “Till Death Do Us Part,” also became a best seller. So has his newest, “And the Sea Will Tell,” which CBS has made into a miniseries starring Richard Crenna, Rachel Ward and Hart Bochner. It will be televised Feb. 25.

The rights to the book, for which Columbia paid nearly \$1 million, are reportedly the highest ever paid for a true crime book.

The story sounds like a simple-to-solve whodunit. Two couples — Mr. and Muff Gordon and Buck Walker and Jennifer Jenkins — find themselves on a deserted isle in the South Pacific. The Gordons dis-

appear, but the other couple shows up with the missing pair’s boat in Hawaii.

Guess who gets charged with the crime? Walker gets convicted. But Jenkins gets off, thanks to Bugliosi.

“She was a victim of circumstances,” Bugliosi said. “There was no one else on the island. The obvious conclusion was that one or both of them did it, and, in her case, there seemed to be a 95 percent pre-judgment of guilt.”

Jenkins was, however, guilty of one mistake.

“She got mixed up with the wrong man,” he said.

Maybe so, but life has been good to Jenkins, according to Bugliosi’s book. She now works in Simi Valley and earns nearly \$100,000 a year as a saleswoman.

Legal eagle

Speaking of Bugliosi, his next book will deal with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. His conclusion won’t be appreciated by conspiracy theorists. Lee Harvey Oswald, Bugliosi said after his investigation, was the lone killer.

Many of the conspiracy experts, he insists, “deliberately distorted” their findings. He also said the Mafia had nothing to do with the Kennedy murder.

“The mob does not go after public figures,” he said. “And they would never go after the most powerful man on earth.”

He said Jack Ruby, who killed Oswald as the accused assassin was being moved from one jail to another, expected to be celebrated as a hero.

“Ruby cried more when Kennedy died than at the death of his parents,” Bugliosi said. “In his small, little mind, he believed they would be making movies about him.”

One person whom Bugliosi declined to defend is Capt. Jeffrey MacDonald, the Green Beret who was convicted of killing his family. He dropped the offer to defend him

when MacDonald refused to take a lie-detector test.

Chip Shots

That four-hour miniseries conclusion for ABC’s “Dynasty” is a go. Esther and Richard Shapiro, who were executive producers of the soap, are writing the screenplay. ABC and Aaron Spelling Productions had been negotiating the deal. . . .

No blood was spilled last week when Evel Knievel dropped by the Carnegie Deli. The daredevil dined alone and amused himself by trying to spear a maraschino cherry out of a fruit cup. . . .

Donald Trump can’t be that broke. He’s building a house in Aspen, Colo. . . .

It’s Valentine’s Day for Bruce Davison and wife Lisa Peliken. They will be performing in “Love Letters,” Thursday at the Canon Theater in Beverly Hills.

Movers and shakers

■ Simon & Schuster is putting a steel curtain in front of Kitty Kelley’s new biography, “Nancy Reagan.” To ensure security before the book’s May publication, no advance copies are being sent out. The irony of all of this is that Michael Korda, the executive editor and chief of Simon & Schuster, was the editor of Nancy Reagan’s autobiography, which S&S published. Alice Mayhew edited Kelley’s exposé.

■ Director Stanley Kramer’s daughter Katharine will be recording a new version of the theme song from the hit series “I Love Lucy.” Kramer will rap in the new version, which will be turned into a dance tune. The session rolls this afternoon at the Westlake Audio Recording Studio in Hollywood. A rock video will be produced, and Milton Berle, a longtime friend of Lucille Ball, has agreed to show up in drag, which was one of his famous gags from his 1950s TV variety show.

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HAVE YOU HEAR



Vincent Bugliosi
Miniseries man



Charles Manson
Writes to Bugliosi



Lisa Peliken
In "Love Letters"

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